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THE
YOUNG MEN'S CHOICE,

By MARY E. HERBERT,

Author of "Kolian Harp," "Woman as she should be," "Flowers by the
Wayside," &c, &c.

HALIFAX, N. S.

PRINTED AT THE "HALIFAX CITIZEN" STEAM PRESS.

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THE YOUNG MEN'S CHOICE.

CHAPTER I.

"Oh ask not a home in the mansions of pride,
Where marble shines out in the pillars and walls;
Though the roof be of gold, it is brilliantly cold;—
No joy may be found in its torch-lighted halls.
But seek for a bosom all honest and true,
Where love once awakened can never depart;
Turn, turn, to that breast, like a dove to its nest,
And you'll find there's no home like a home in the heart."

"I shall have to come to it at last, I am pretty sure of that," mused Edward Mortimer, as he sat with his feet reclining on the fender, and his eyes fixed on the glowing coals, for it was a cold damp evening in the latter part of May. The book he had been reading, fell listlessly from his hand on to the rug at his feet; it was an interesting work on Physical Science, but it had lost its charm for him this evening, for reveries on the past and future had taken its place.

"Dear me, how I wish I were rich! I am so hampered for want of means, that I cannot enter into any speculations; there is Boardman, with not half my education and business capacities, becoming absolutely wealthy, because he has a good capital to trade on.

"Now if I had only had some hundreds of pounds to-day, I might have made a profitable investment that would have yielded thousands, I verily believe.

"I am sick and tired of doing business in this petty way—counting every shilling before spending it; it may be *sure* enough, but it is intolerably *slow*.

"As to *marrying*, that is morally impossible, at least marrying one as poor as myself. Here I am twenty-five years old, and have not much more prospect of a home of my own, than I had at twenty-one.

"A home of my own;" the words seemed to have a magical effect, for the discontent visible on the countenance of the young man, gradually gave place to a look of softened sadness.

"If I marry Alice Weldon, I shall have to keep her waiting for two or three years at least,—and even then, I doubt if I should do more than barely get along comfortably.

"But Miss Ludgate, that is a different affair. Her wealth would be the very thing I need. Money makes money all the world over,—and I would be able to have a splendid establishment, with a handsome, dignified woman at its head, without being tormented to death by those harrassing cares, attendant on straitened circumstances.

"If the *love* would only go with the wealth, how happy I should be; but that is idle wishing. I must get rid of my romantic ideas, and the sooner the better for my peace. The age for that has gone

by. Utilitarianism is the motto now, and I shall have to succumb to the popular idea."

A knock at the chamber door interrupted these matter-of-fact thoughts.

"Come in," was the response, and a young man of about the same age as Mortimer, entered the room.

"Why Sidney, is it you? I am very glad to see you," was the warm greeting. "Where on earth have you been those few weeks past?"

"Out of town, on business for my employer," was the reply. "We have been very much hurried of late, and this is the first leisure evening I have secured since my return, so I determined to improve it by coming to see you. Don't you feel yourself flattered by my preference," he laughingly inquired.

"Indeed I do, though we don't agree on every subject, we agree to differ, which is more than can be said of most of the world."

"But come, here is a comfortable arm-chair, draw it up to the fire, and make yourself at home, that is if a Bachelor's sanctum can be called home."

"I think you look pretty comfortable at all events," replied his friend, Mr. Ellwood, as seating himself, he looked round on the pretty room, with its blazing fire, and snugly-drawn curtains, and its mahogany book-case, filled with interesting and instructive works.

"Well, I am tolerably comfortable I suppose, but not so much so, as to be contented with my present lot."

"I have been just wondering when I should be blessed with a home of my own, before you came in, and have come to the conclusion that to obtain it, I must have money."

"Money answereth all things," was the reply; "and yet there is something more than money wanted, in my opinion, to constitute a bona-fide home. Do you remember the lines—

" 'Tis Hope, and Love, and Memory give
A home in which the heart can live."

"There you are Sydney, with your romantic notions, which I have determined to eschew for ever."

"And with them all thoughts of Alice Weldon, I presume?" There was a slight tremulousness in the speaker's voice, that might not have passed unobserved by his companion, had his mind been less pre-absorbed.

"How strange you should have guessed so accurately; but indeed, Sydney, I am serious, and I really would be thankful for your advice."

"It shall be given to the best of my ability," was the grave response.

"Well, then, listen to my position. I am in business for myself; to be sure a pretty safe one, but the gain so slow, so small, I am out of patience. If I had only a large capital, I should be able to make my mark in the world, to marry, and have a splendid establishment. Now, how on earth can I procure this money?"

"A question very difficult to answer, Edward."

"Well, I have come to the conclusion—no other way presenting itself—of marrying for money. There is Miss Ludgate. I tell you this in confidence, of course, I know well how trustworthy you are. Her father, who is very wealthy, is my particular friend, and it was only the other day he said to me, that he would far prefer a young man of steady habits, even though comparatively poor, for his daughter, than one of those who, inheriting wealth, know so little the value of what they have so easily obtained, as to recklessly squander it; and I know well that the hint was for me, for he has several times made similar observations in my presence."

"But the young lady. I should think that was the most important part?"

"Well, I have no rival, that is one thing; and, without vanity, I fancy she favors your humble servant a little."

"And Miss Weldon?"

A flush mounted to Edward Mortimer's brow, as he turned hastily away.

"I have a great respect and esteem for that young lady; she is my beau-ideal of woman. But then, you see how I am circumstanced—strong inclination and limited means, on the one hand, and the probability of wealth, a large sphere of action, and wide-spread influence on the other."

"You seem to leave the lady out of your calculation entirely."

"Oh, well, she is handsome and dignified looking. A little proud and haughty, perhaps, that is natural

for one in her position. I dare say we shall agree well enough, at least as well as the majority of married people, for I doubt if there is much love lost among a good many. And now what do you advise?"

"I am afraid my advice will not be palatable, but you are quite welcome to it. To advise you to sacrifice your happiness, for the sake of worldly gain, would be the last thing I would think of doing. I would rather strive to persuade you to lay aside your ambitious views; to be content with your present circumstances, until something better offers at least, and to enjoy the peace of a good conscience, and the sweets of domestic happiness, which open so invitingly before you."

"But don't you see, it would be impossible for me to marry with my present income, unless I find some way of increasing it."

"Well, you might not have much for luxury, but quite sufficient for comfort. You have none dependent on you for support; you are quite alone in the world, and could live in my opinion, most happily, and maintain a wife with your present income."

"Yes, and never get up in the world: Always drudging along, without any prospect of doing better. No, that would be unendurable."

"Far better, I should esteem it, than to live in possession of all the luxuries that wealth can purchase, and yet feel the heart empty, sad and desolate. For you would feel this. You know well that the lady of whom you have spoken, is not one cal-

culated to make a man happy. Cold, haughty, unamiable; living only for show, caring only for the opinions of the fashionable world, she would be a poor fire-side companion indeed, and your home, shared with her, would soon become distasteful, if not positively hateful. And if these riches so much coveted, should "take to themselves wings and fly away," as they have in numberless other cases, what then? To what source would you look for comfort?"

"Without that love which beareth all things, believeth all things, endureth all things, and deprived of those outward advantages on which you have placed your affection, you would indeed be a miserable man."

"One would think you a prophet, you seem to read the future so accurately," said Edward somewhat testily.

"Well, you know, my friend, I am representing things in a strong light, perhaps, but it is because I have your real welfare at heart."

"I know that, Sydney, I know it well," was the hearty response, "and however things may turn out, I shall always be thankful for your friendly warnings, even though I may not follow them fully. My better feelings coincide in your views, and yet, and yet," he said laughingly.

"A wilful man must have his way."

CHAPTER II.

"His spirit wholly turned
To stern ambition's dreams, to that fierce strife
Which leads to life's high places, and recked not
What lovely flowers might perish in his path!"

Hail, Virtue, hail! from thee proceed
The great design, the heroic deed;
The heart that melts for human woes,
Valor, and truth, and calm repose.
Though fortune frown, though fate prepare
Her shafts, and wake corroding care;
In vain to shake the guiltless soul,
Changed fortune frowns, and thunders roll!"

Edward Mortimer was peculiarly alone in the world, without kin, with the exception of distant connexions, whom he had never seen, and whom he had never cared to see.

The sweet charities of home were almost unknown to him; for, an only child, his mother had died in his infancy, and his father, while Edward was a boy at school, leaving him but a small patrimony, which had been judiciously invested by his guardian, a prudent and kind-hearted man, and formed the nucleus of his present small, but snug and prosperous business.

Naturally amiable, and of fine social feelings, his handsome personal appearance, combined with extremely prepossessing manners, won for him general esteem and regard, and entrance into those higher circles, from which his position might otherwise have excluded him.

With much to attract, and much to admire in his character, there was a vein of wordliness running through it—an eager ambition to rise in society, if not by merit, at all events, by the force of external circumstances.

He knew the advantages of wealth, and he aspired to them, and though his heart was naturally a genial and loving one, yet with a resolute will, he was ready to sacrifice even love itself, on the altar of ambition.

For while he would scarcely acknowledge it even to himself, he yet loved Alice Weldon with a deep and fervent love, though to her he had not made known his attachment, for he was too honorable to awaken hopes which he feared were destined never to be realized, for Alice, like himself, was the child of comparative poverty.

A widowed mother, dependent in a great measure on her for support, she added to their narrow income, by teaching a small, but well regulated school, for which her education and natural capacity had well qualified her.

And so Edward Mortimer's heart wavered between Love and Ambition, until, wearied out, he sometimes resolved precipitately to end the conflict, and embracing the latter, to bid to the dreams he was wont to style "romantic and foolish," a "long, last adieu."

Under very different auspices, and surrounded by a different social atmosphere, was passed the early youth of Sydney Ellwood.

The eldest son of a large family, his father had once been an extensive ship-owner, but reverses came. What boots it to dwell on the old, old story, so often realized by sorrowing hearts, of losses by speculations, by tempestuous seas, and by the failure and downfall of others; suffice it to say, that the young man of whom we write, had scarcely attained his majority, ere he found himself the chief prop of his household; no longer the inheritor of wealth, but called, even now in his bright youth, by the voice of affection, as well as by the last dying charge of a beloved father, to be the support, counsellor, and protector of a sorrowing mother, and a band of youthful brothers and sisters, who looked to him as one that should fill the place, of the departed head of that once happy household.

"It is good for a man that he bear the yoke in his youth," is imprinted on the pages of Sacred Writ, and Sydney Ellwood's experience confirmed the truth of the assertion.

Naturally sedate and high principled, sorrow had led him to think, and think deeply, of life's great end; to distinguish the true from the false; to view in their proper light, things seen and temporal, as not worthy to be compared with things not seen and eternal; while the responsible situation in which, by the hand of Providence, he had been placed, the consciousness that others looked up to him for support, protection, and example, had given him a maturity of sentiment, and a ripeness of judgment which often excited the astonishment and admiration of men far advanced in years.

For sorrow after all, is one of God's good angels, sent in love, not in wrath, to wean the heart from a world which, in spite of its vicissitudes, presents so much to allure and tempt the soul, from those higher paths in which its safety and welfare are intimately connected.

Sydney and Edward Mortimer had been school-boys and College mates together, and a friendship, that bid fair to outlive the usual period of youthful friendships, existed between them.

Passionately fond of literature, Sydney had hoped to devote his life to its pursuit; but his father's death, and the changed circumstances of the family, rendered this an impossibility; and thankful to secure a clerkship in a counting-house, he henceforth devoted his energies to forwarding the interests of his employers, and found in their ever increasing esteem, and the grateful love of his kindred, for whose sake he had made the sacrifice, abundant recompence.

CHAPTER III.

"Oh that pleasant garden plot;
A shrubbery was beside it,—
And an old and mossy apple tree,
With a woodbine wreathed to hide it "

"The Father of all, glances down
On his children who strive in the race;
On all who run well He bestows
His looks of ineffable grace;
Go on then in faith, all that run well must win,
To leave the good paths, or to faint, were a sin!"

The hour of noon had returned, and Alice Wel-

don dismissed her scholars to their pleasant playground.

A large old-fashioned dwelling was the one in which she resided, situated in a stirring part of the city, the front windows looking out on a busy thoroughfare, where pedestrians seemed to emulate vehicles in the rapidity of their motions.

Parallel with the opposite side of the street, ran the placid waters of a deep and capacious harbor, in which many a stately vessel found safe anchorage and welcome haven, from the fierce storms that threatened to engulf it, fathoms deep, in the Atlantic billows, that lifted up their mighty voice beyond.

The busy war of trade rendered the apartments thus situated, not so agreeable to a lover of quiet, one, who—

*“By Nature was averse to noise,
Hating the bustle half the world enjoys.”*

but the school-room looked out on a very different scene. Its pleasant windows opened on a spacious sloping garden, not perhaps kept in the very best order, for this would have required time and means far more than the inmates possessed; but a charming place, nevertheless, for childhood and youth to spend in pleasant recreation.

The part nearest to the dwelling was cultivated as a vegetable and flower garden, in which Alice's choicest plants bloomed gaily; but the more elevated slope terminated in a grassy lawn, interspersed, here and there, with apple and cherry trees,

whose ripened fruit was anxiously anticipated by the merry youthful band that thronged that happy school room.

How the children enjoyed their hour of recreation; how they bounded up that sloping hill, and ran to and fro on the grassy lawn. With what merry shouts, with the glee of hearts untouched by sorrow, while often standing at the casement, beholding their enjoyment, and sharing in their pleasure, was their youthful and dearly-loved teacher, with her ever patient and winning smile, that lent an irresistible charm to her thoughtful and pensive countenance.

And Alice looked very thoughtful now, as she sat at her desk, revolving in her mind the possibility or probability of settling some of those troublesome little bills, which, lying in a secret drawer of her *escritoire*, had often of late disturbed her peace of mind. Not that she was reckless or extravagant in her expenditure; but her mother's very small income was little more than sufficient to pay the rent of the dwelling they occupied, and the thousand and one household items, which must be met, were all depending on the small quarterly fees she obtained from her pupils.

Of late, too, an epidemic, somewhat fatal, had diminished their numbers; her mother, long an invalid, seemed for the past few weeks to be growing much feebler, necessitating the constant attendance of a physician, and her failing appetite craved those little delicacies which tell so hardly upon the scanty purse; so little marvel is it, if Alice's gentle

face, so capable of lighting up with a joyous and happy expression, wore a sad and thoughtful look now; for life, viewed from her stand-point, was very dark, and had not her faith been strong in the promises of One who has declared himself to be, "A father of the fatherless," she would have sunk with dismay as she anticipated the future.

Yet let none deem her weak or timid, if sometimes her heart fainted within her, for with no male relative near, to whom she could look up for protection—her only uncle dwelling in a distant land—and the probability that would sometimes pierce like a poisoned dart through her spirit, that ere long the nearest, the dearest, the most cherished object of affection, would have to be resigned to the relentless conqueror, Death; it would have been strange indeed, if sometimes Hope, and Faith, and Courage, had not seemed to forsake her.

Young ladies, in your wealthy homes, surrounded by every luxury, ministered constantly to by kind friends, every wish anticipated, every desire gratified; ye butterflies of fashion,

"Imagining in your hours of glee,
That all the world was made for yee,"

Alice Weldon was as fair, as refined, as gentle, as æsthetic in her tastes as you; but she had been early trained in the school of Adversity; she had learned that best of lessons—to feel for others woes; to sympathize in human sorrow, and, if possible, to relieve, ever remembering that it is "more blessed to give than to receive."

Go ye and do likewise. Forget not that you are accountable at Heaven's high tribunal for the wealth that you regard as your own; and rousing yourselves from fancy's bewitching dreams, go forth on errands of mercy to those who are "ready to perish;" so shall you taste that sweetest luxury—the luxury of doing good; the favor of heaven will lighten your path, and, combined with the smile of an approving conscience, impart a richer zest to every blessing you possess.

But we must return to Alice, who, glancing at her watch, was surprised to see, so quickly in absorbing thought had sped the time, that the children's play-hour had passed, and ringing the bell, each little class was again busily employed at its appointed tasks, and Alice, in the delight of imparting knowledge, for which, fortunately, she had an especial tact; in winning the attention of the thoughtless, and in arousing the lethargic mind, lost sight of the cares by which she had been harassed, and found in well discharged duties, a peace and satisfaction that none but those who have experienced, can appreciate.

CHAPTER IV.

"Here comes one whose cheeks would flush,
But to have her garments brush
'Gainst the girl who pale and thin,
Worked the broidery stitches in;
Weaving from her bitter thought,
Heart's ease and forget-me-not;
Satirising her despair,
With the emblems woven there!"

There were flags flying, music playing, processions marching, for it was a gala day in the city, and crowds of well-dressed people thronged the streets, intent, in some way of amusement or other, on passing the hours set apart by public authority, for celebration and festivity.

In an elegant drawing-room of a commodious mansion, situated in one of the fashionable streets of the city, were gathered part of Mr. Ludgate's family.

Some of the younger members, released from school, were standing at the windows, amusing themselves by observing the passers-by; another was at the Piano, rattling off now and then some merry tune; while the eldest daughter was more agreeably engaged, in lively converse with a young gentleman, our old friend, Edward Mortimer, who, since we had the pleasure of introducing him to the reader, had, in pursuance of his resolution, become a frequent visitor at Mr. Ludgate's, and judging from the unusually animated smile that lights up the countenance of the handsome, though haughty-looking girl, we should imagine his attentions are not unacceptable.

"Look, look, Louisa," ejaculated Cecilia, a little sister of eleven years old, "see, there is Miss Weldon, my teacher. How pretty she is. Do look a moment, she is on the opposite side of the street."

"Really, Cecilia," was the petulant reply, "you must come away from that window. Mamma will be extremely angry, if she comes in, and finds you

there, looking out and making remarks on the passers-by; it is very rude and unladylike."

"I am sure I am doing no harm," said the spirited but affectionate child. "I only want you to look at my teacher; she will be gone if you don't make haste."

"Cecilia, you talk ridiculously. I have no acquaintance with Miss Weldon, nor the slightest desire to see her.

"I only wish she would teach you to act a little better, and not so rudely to interrupt others;" and a frown gathered on the brow of the speaker.

"And so she does: she teaches me every thing that is good, and I love her ten thousand times better than I love you."

The latter part of the sentence having been uttered in rather a lower tone, was unheard, save by Edward Mortimer, who, at Cecilia's ejaculations, had almost unconsciously risen from the sofa, and stood by her at the window.

A lady friend meeting Alice, had detained her for a few minutes on the opposite side, as she made inquiries respecting her mother.

At length, bidding her adieu, Alice was about hurrying on, when happening to cast a glance at Mr. Ludgate's dwelling, she saw her little scholar at the window, bowing a smiling recognition, while, standing beside her, though somewhat shaded from observation by the rich lace curtains that adorned the casement, she beheld the tall form of Edward Mortimer.

A crimson flush mounted to his very temples, as he returned, with his usual grace, the lady's somewhat stately bow—a flush not unobserved by the acute Cecilia, or by the sharper eyes of her sister Louisa, whose glance was bent in that direction.

“Why, Mr. Mortimer,” said Cecilia delightedly, you never told me you knew my teacher?”

“You never asked me,” was the smiling, though somewhat evasive reply.

“No, but I have talked about her enough, and you never joined me the least bit. Now tell me, don't you like her very much?”

Edward was spared a reply to this rather dangerous question, by Miss Ludgate, now thoroughly displeased, interposing.

“Really, Cecilia, we had better spend the remainder of the day in discussing that important personage, your Teacher. Mr. Mortimer, will you have the goodness to come to the Piano; I want to shew you the new music we were speaking about the other evening? I procured it yesterday.”

The request was immediately complied with, and in listening to the sweet and exquisitely executed music, it is to be hoped that Edward Mortimer lost all remembrance of the gentle form, and soft dark eyes, that for a moment had dazzled his vision.

CHAPTER V.

"Are words then only false? Are there no looks—
Mute but most eloquent ;—no gentle cares
That win so much upon the fair young things
They seem to guard ;"

"He might not be all I deemed him—
Noble, generous, gifted, true ;
Not the less I fondly deemed him,
All those flattering visions drew."

Alice returned slowly home. Many a happy family group she met intent on the pleasures of the passing hour ; but she herself was sad and lonely—all the more so, perhaps, as she felt disposed to draw a contrast between their situation and her own.

"To weep with them that weep," is comparatively an easy task to the sympathetic heart ; but to "rejoice with them that do rejoice," though a command equally binding, is far more difficult ;—to experience a delight when we see others, and those it maybe strangers to us, possess many sources of enjoyment which we sadly lack ; to see them merry and joyous, while our own hearts are prostrated beneath a weight of grief ; and yet to feel not only unenvious at their condition, but a positive pleasure in beholding their happiness, requires no small amount of christian principle and grace.

And to-day Alice seemed partially to have yielded to the voice of the tempter ; to have lost sight of the hand that had thus far gently led her on, "even from her childhood's days ;" and as a natur-

al consequence, dejected and almost despairing, she pursued her homeward path.

Perhaps the glance at Mr. Ludgate's casement, had something to do with her present feelings.

It is true, Mr. Mortimer's attentions had not been of a pointed character; they had been paid under the name and disguise of friendship; but they were quite sufficient to awaken emotions of interest in a young, warm, and impulsive heart, such as Alice's.

He had been a frequent visitor at their dwelling; ostensibly calling to see her invalid mother, for whom he appeared to entertain a high regard; but Alice had been obtuse indeed, could she have failed to mark his kindling glance, as he engaged her in animated conversation; or the warm interest he manifested in her welfare, and the delight and satisfaction her society appeared to afford him.

Of late his visits had been few and far between; her mother had remarked it, and wondered at the cause, and though outwardly, seeming indifferent, Alice had wondered too; but now, in one moment, all seemed revealed to her.

There was one subject on which Mr. Mortimer and herself had always differed; though very deferentially his opinion had been expressed, nevertheless it had given many a pang to her sensitive heart. When wealth, as it sometimes did, became the topic of conversation, he would enlarge so much on its advantages and influence—seem so much to desire it, not for its own sake, but for the benefits it would confer—and to ignore comparative poverty, not exactly as a crime, but as an evil greatly to be

deplored, that, as we have said before, she would sometimes feel deeply pained at the worldliness of his views, detracting as they did from his many high and amiable qualities. But—

“To make idols and to find them clay,
And to bewail their worship;”

such, sang one tuneful and truthful writer, is woman's lot, and Alice was not excepted from the too common fate.

In her own heart, while she could not help acknowledging that this acquisitive spirit cast a shadow over what she would fain have had—the unsullied brightness of her friend's character, yet, woman-like, she had many excuses to offer.

“No doubt his business annoys him, not having sufficient means to enlarge it; it must be galling to a young man of his high talent and business capacities, to find himself straitened in every effort, by the want of larger means; and to one of such energy and ambition, it must be hard to see others, less fitted, occupy a rank in life, from which, nothing but the absence of wealth excludes him.

These were slight excuses to be sure, yet they satisfied her for a time; but now the veil had been rudely drawn away, and she saw that an error in theory, if long cherished, will too surely become an error in practice, and thus be productive of incalculable evil, to him who has given it a lodgement and resting place.

Alice had heard Mr. Mortimer once allude to Miss Ludgate. Some little incident had come under his observation, which placed that young lady in

a not very amiable light ; and he had strongly expressed his disapprobation of her conduct ; this had been all the more remembered by Alice, because Edward Mortimer did not belong to that class of young men who seem to take an especial delight in marking and commenting on woman's faults and foibles. He did not esteem it a mark of manliness, as some appear to do, to ridicule and depreciate the weaker sex ; for a high esteem and regard for woman as woman, had always characterized him ; so that if he censured them in any particular, one might be quite sure that his reproof and displeasure were too well merited.

Alas, thought Alice, that with all his estimable qualities, pride and worldly ambition should so warp his better judgment, that to secure their gratification, he will not hesitate to sacrifice, if needs be, the best and truest emotions of his heart.

Nor could she help feeling a little bitterly, that had she possessed the coveted wealth, there would have been no demur on Edward Mortimer's part ; she knew full well, with woman's keen instinct, that she possessed his high esteem and regard, and rebellious thoughts of what "might have been," had she been differently situated, drowned for a time the "still small voice" of an upbraiding conscience, and she entered her quiet home, disturbed, restless, and unhappy.

CHAPTER VI.

"There is not a grand inspiring thought ;
There is not a truth by wisdom taught ;
There is not a feeling, pure and high,
That may not be read in a mother's eye."

"And said I, 'I shall dance no more,'
For though but young in years,
I know what makes men wise and sad,—
Affection's ceaseless fears ;
And that dull aching of the heart,
Which is not eased by tears."

A pretty chamber was that occupied by Mrs. Weldon. It was on a lower story than the school-room, and commanded a similar view of the spacious and old-fashioned garden.

The balmy breath of flowers came wafted in through the open window, from a large white rose-bush that grew directly beneath the casement, and a honey-suckle that clambered over the wall, a few of whose rich blossoms, escaped from their support, peeped curiously in, gazing, perhaps, at their sister flowers, that tastefully arranged, adorned the little work-stand that stood near.

Mrs. Weldon, whose health had somewhat improved, is seated on a comfortable cushioned arm-chair, propped up by pillows; the small slippered feet resting on an ottoman, her daughter's pretty workmanship; she had been knitting, a favorite occupation with her, serving rather to amuse, than weary her; but the knitting now lay idly on her lap, and with an invalid's restlessness, she began

wishing for Alice, and wondering what could keep her so long.

Not that she stood in need of any little service she might render, for a servant in an adjoining apartment was within sound of the hand-bell placed beside her; but her daughter was the delight of her eyes, the one object of solicitude and affection, and her absence, to her idolizing mother, was as the sudden withdrawal of sunshine; her presence, the chief earthly blessing to one whose days were evidently drawing to a close.

There were painful thoughts connected with the future, that now somewhat disturbed her mind, for well the lady knew, that soon she must sleep the sleep of death; slowly but surely, her system was succumbing to the effects of an inward disease, which physicians might alleviate, but could never cure, and the one pang connected with her departure, was the remembrance that she must leave her orphan daughter comparatively alone, to tread the thorny path of life, to encounter its tempests of care and sorrow, uncheered it might be, by human sympathy, and unassisted by human affection.

"But this is wrong," she murmured; "the Helper of him that hath no help, will watch over and guide her; and it may be permitted to me, though unseen, to hover around her, to whisper words of counsel and encouragement, thus performing the hallowed mission of one of those bright intelligencies, sent forth to minister to the heirs of salvation."

But her reveries were interrupted by the entrance of Alice, who had tarried in the parlor until she became more composed; for no consideration would have induced her to disclose to her mother, the painful and bitter thoughts which had been swelling within her heart, lest she should add one additional pang to that already wounded and failing spirit.

So well had she succeeded in subduing all traces of emotion, that it was with quite a cheerful air she entered the room, and affectionately addressed Mrs. Weldon.

"I hope you feel none the worse for sitting up, dear Mamma. I am afraid you thought me very long gone, but I have been detained a little by meeting with friends, who made many kind inquiries after you. I dare say, though, Jane has been so attentive, that I need not flatter myself you missed me much."

"Missed you, dear child, you are always missed, though Jane is a good girl, and I have needed nothing. But come, take off your bonnet and shawl, and sit down by me. I want to have a good look at you, and to hear all about your walk, whom you have seen, and what you have heard."

"Indeed you shall be speedily gratified; but you have not told me how you felt, yet?"

"Well, dear, no worse, and I think a little better than when you went out. This delicious summer air has quite revived me."

"Ah, Mamma, I do think you are growing stronger of late, and, perhaps, you will be spared to me for many, many years."

Mrs. Weldon's lips quivered with emotion—emotion which she sedulously strove to repress. She knew how Alice, with all the hopefulness of youth, clung to the belief that she would yet recover, and it seemed hard, it seemed cruel, to crush that trusting, loving heart, by imparting fully the fatal knowledge, which faithful physicians had long since revealed to herself; so she only placed her wasted hands lovingly on her daughter's head, and, smoothing with a mother's tenderness, the glossy dark hair, for Alice had taken her favorite seat at her mother's knee, contented herself with saying—

"My times are in the hands of a tender Father, my dear child. If it be his will to lengthen out the brittle thread of life, all things are possible with Him; if not, let us pray that He will enable us both to say, 'Thy will be done.'"

Neither spoke for a few minutes, but at length the mother said in a tone of assumed playfulness, not unobservant of her daughter's dejection,

"But come, Alice, you must not cheat me out of the promised particulars of your walk."

Thus appealed to, Alice checked the flood of sorrow that seemed ready to overwhelm her, and began giving a detailed account of the morning's engagement.

"And I too," said Mrs. Weldon at its conclusion, "have had company in your absence; one visitor came; see if you can guess who?"

Alice named several of their friends, but failed in telling the right one.

"There, Mamma," she said at length, "I think I have exhausted the list of our acquaintances; you will have to tell me, for I shall never be able to guess."

"I wonder you had not thought of Mrs. Ellwood?"

"Why, you know she was quite ill a week or two ago, and though I heard she was better, I did not think she had recovered sufficiently to venture out."

"Yes, she is looking quite well now, and the very sight of her face did me good. I think she remained here an hour, for the time passed quickly, talking of by-gone days. She wishes you very much to spend to-morrow afternoon with her. Now that you have given your holidays, you must take advantage of them," she says, "to go out as much as possible."

"But, Mamma, I hope you told her I could not go, for you know it would be impossible for me to leave you so long."

"Indeed, Alice, you must go. Jane can take excellent care of me, and I shall feel far happier, knowing you are enjoying yourself, than to see you sitting here day after day; your bright youth passing away amid such harrassing cares, and constant attendance on your poor sick mother."

"Enjoy myself," and the deep sigh which she could not repress, told how little that sad heart recked of earth's enjoyment. "How could I enjoy myself, knowing you were ill and suffering at home?"

"But, indeed, dear child, you must not give way to such feelings. You must rouse yourself, or your health will fail; and then what would become of me, without the faithful care of my dear little daughter. Your dejected tone, Alice, seemed to imply that enjoyment was something you never expected to realize again; but in the moral, as well as in the natural world, the storm is always succeeded by sunshine; day follows night in regular succession, and He who chastens in love, hath assured us that "He will not always chide, lest the spirit should fail before Him, and the soul which He hath made."

"Have you forgotten the verse you read to me only yesterday—

"The light of joy again shall fill,
The lids that overflow with tears;
And weary hours of toil and pain,
Shall be repaid by happier years!"

"Dear Mamma, I am sorry I gave way to such feelings, but indeed I could not help it;" at length said Alice, raising her bowed-down head, which had been hidden in her mother's lap, to conceal the scalding tears that, in spite of her efforts, flowed forth freely.

"Those tears have refreshed me; I feel better now, and if you wish it, and are no worse, I will go to Mrs. Ellwood's to-morrow, as you have promised, and gather as much material as I can from my visit, for your entertainment on my return."

"There, I recognize my brave-hearted daughter again," said the mother, affectionately kissing her pale cheek.

"But come dear, I feel a little weary, and will lay down; and you, in the meanwhile, had better take a stroll in your garden, and see how your flowers are blooming."

Alice complied with the request, and while her mother fell into a quiet sleep, walked into the garden; but beauty, fragrance, and sunshine, seemed to have no power to chase the sadness from her spirit, to lift, for a moment, the weight that oppressed her soul, and hurrying to a little arbor at the further end of the garden, screened from observation by thickly intertwining branches, she sat down in the rustic arm-chair, and gave way to one of those fierce paroxysms of grief—those choking sobs and bitter floods of tears, which shook the slender form as with the force of a whirlwind, and seemed, by their irresistible power to have concentrated in them whole years of agony.

CHAPTER VII.

"Love is the gift which God hath given,
To man alone, beneath the heaven;
It is the secret sympathy;
The silver link, the silken tie,
Which heart to heart, and mind to mind,
In body and in soul doth bind."

"I would give
My life to buy you happiness."

"Rat-tat-tap."

Jane quickly answered the knock at the hall door.

"Is Miss Weldon within," inquired a young gentleman, Mr. Sydney Ellwood, whom we have previously introduced to our readers.

"Yes, Sir, she went into the garden a few moments ago, but if you will walk into the parlor, I will go and tell her. Or, perhaps, you would prefer going into the garden yourself."

"By all means," was the reply, and suiting the action to the word, Sydney, directed by the servant, stepped out into the porch, and was soon slowly treading the somewhat steep path that led to the summit of the garden, where, so she had informed him, it was probable Miss Weldon could be found.

He reached the height, and for a moment paused to take breath, and to admire the pretty prospect that lay so invitingly before him, but as his glance wandered around, he saw not the slightest trace of Alice.

"The girl must have been mistaken," he thought, or Miss Weldon must have returned to the house without her knowing it; for she certainly is not here."

He turned to descend, but perceiving a narrow path at the foot of the grassy slope, terminating at a rustic arbor, very naturally turned his steps in that direction, hoping there to find the object of his search; and had nearly reached the summer house, when his attention was arrested by the sound of weeping within; a low choking sob, now and then, as though the mourner had become almost exhausted from the violence of previous emotions.

He paused, alarmed and embarrassed. "It is, it must be Miss Weldon," he inwardly ejaculated; "but what can be the cause of this violent grief?"

"Her Mother, surely she is not worse. The girl would certainly have told me, had that been the case. Fain would I assuage that grief; but I dare not intrude; it is too sacred a thing for me to intermeddle with. I will return quickly to the house and leave my message with the servant."

Scarcely had the resolution been made, much less carried into execution, when the door suddenly opened, and Alice stood on the threshold.

It was a moment of mutual embarrassment, but the lady, woman-like, was the first to recover herself.

"Why, Mr. Sydney, how do you do? The soft grass deadened your footsteps, I suppose, for I had no idea any person was without."

"You must pardon my intrusion, Miss Alice, but the girl told me that you were in the garden, and so I came to search for you myself; but I am afraid that my visit is rather untimely."

"Oh, no, Mr. Sydney," and the pale cheek flushed slightly; "you know we are old friends, brother and sister almost. You wonder, I dare say, at my discomposed countenance, and, perhaps, you overheard me weeping; but I have felt dejected and desponding to-day; my mother's continued illness is a source of great sorrow to me, as you may well believe; and you know there are times when one is apt to view every thing in a gloomier light than at others; and so it has been with me to-day," and

tears stood in the eyes, and trembled on the thick lashes of the speaker.

"A good cry, we women think, relieves the heart, and so I was just trying its efficacy," she added, with a tremulous smile, "and find myself benefited by the prescription."

Mr. Ellwood paused ere replying, for he scarcely dared to trust himself to speak, lest he should either say too little or too much.

"Dear Miss Alice," at length he murmured, "you know not how deeply I sympathise with you, for I too have passed through a similar trial." Yet "man is strong to bear with sorrow;" but you, and a glance of tender pitying affection was involuntarily bestowed on the slender form that was slowly walking by his side, "God in His mercy shield you from trial; or if that may not be, give you a double portion of strength to bear it."

There was silence for a few moments, for Sydney's heart was full.

"Oh," he thought, "were I but circumstanced as Mortimer, no wordly consideration, no ambitious desire after wealth, would have tempted me to forego the priceless privilege of protecting and comforting sweet Alice, ever dear to me, but never dearer than now. But my path is plain; she regards me now only as a brother, and as such I must remain, for I dare not wish her to think otherwise of me. I may not seek to win her affections, for other claims are paramount, and duty demands the sacrifice of inclination.

"I had not loved thee dear so much,
Loved I not honor more."

The lines, as they came fresh to remembrance, nerved him with new resolution and courage, and he broke the silence by saying—

"You have just intimated, Miss Alice, that you regard me as a brother; you must then allow me a brother's privilege of sympathising and assisting you, if possible, by counsel, or in any other manner in which my services might be acceptable."

Alice thanked him with a grateful smile. "Indeed," she said, "I feel deeply your kindness, and shall not hesitate to avail myself of your advice, on any emergency that may arise."

"And it shall be given to the best of my ability," was the reply.

"But I had nearly forgotten that I came here, partly as a messenger from my mother," said Sydney, as entering again the dwelling, he followed Alice into the neat parlour, and seated himself at her request, on the pretty chintz-covered couch.

"There is a note respecting, I believe, some pattern of fancy-work, which you promised, but as you were out to-day when she called, she forgot to mention it. I told her I thought my memory would serve me sufficiently to remember her message, but she said, 'your head is so occupied now with business affairs, that I am afraid it will hardly find room for so trivial a matter, so I prefer to write.'"

"But now, having performed my mother's commission, I must not omit my own. I have brought you a number of a new monthly periodical, for

which I have lately become a subscriber ; there are some choice articles in it, which I think you would like to read."

"I am very, very much obliged ; you are extremely considerate, Mr. Sydney," and Alice's eyes glistened, as taking the magazine from his hand, she glanced rapidly over its contents.

"Books are rare treasures to me, for my library is not very extensive ; you know most of poor Papa's works were sold ; I have read and re-read all my little volumes, and it was only this morning I was wishing for something new to read, little thinking how soon my desire would be granted."

"I can assure you, you are heartily welcome to any books I possess, that you would like to read ; they will acquire a double value in my eyes by your perusal of them ; and whenever I purchase any new ones, which is a luxury I dare seldom indulge in, it will give me a great satisfaction to know that they will afford pleasure, not only to my mother and sisters, but also to yourself."

Alice and Sydney were old acquaintances. When children, their fathers both living and maintaining wealthy establishments, they had resided in adjoining dwellings ; and from thence, had sprung up an intimacy and friendship, which the lapse of time, or the vicissitudes they had experienced, had neither power to weaken or diminish.

Of late, however, they had not met as often as they were wont to do in former days. The changed circumstances of both ; the removal of the families into different neighborhoods ; and Alice's school,

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together with her mother's long illness, prevented her from visiting Mrs. Ellwood, as often as that lady would have desired ; and Sydney, remembering the sacred claims that had been imposed on him by natural affection, as well as by a dying father's counsel, scarcely dared trust himself within the sphere of fascination which, all unconsciously to herself, she exercised upon him, lest he might waver and falter in his new-formed resolutions, or, at least, perform the duties devolving upon him, with less ardor and cheerfulness.

Besides, he had another motive for thus keeping aloof from Alice's society. He had been early aware of Edward Mortimer's regard for her—a regard which he fancied was in some measure reciprocated ; and estimating highly the character of his friend, and remembering too, how utterly unprotected the death of her mother would leave Alice, he was prepared to sacrifice all selfish inclinations, and to rejoice in their mutual happiness.

But now the case was altered, and bitterly as he regretted Edward's conduct with regard to Miss Weldon—for he had not a doubt in his mind, that his resolution, respecting Miss Ludgate, had been carried into effect, he may be pardoned, if, in spite of himself, a feeling of joy thrilled his spirit, as he remembered she was still free, and, who knows, yet might be won.

He did not dare to indulge those thoughts ; but now and then they would intrude ; and if they served to inspire him with courage for the battle of life ; to give fresh fire to his eye, and new buoyancy

to his step, who, possessed of a loving heart, could, for a moment, reprove or condemn.

CHAPTER VIII.

"Dost hear beneath the ocean,
The gathering tempest form!
See'st thou afar the little cloud,
That grows into the storm!"

"I see a hand you cannot see,
That beckons me away."

Six years have winged their flight, and joined the mighty caravansary of past ages.

The seasons have revolved their rounds as usual; seed-time and harvest, summer and winter, fulfilling their appointed tasks; but time hath, nevertheless, brought many changes to the hearts and homes of earth's perishing race.

To many a fireside it hath brought—

"Faces and footsteps and all things strange."

To many a heart lamentation and woe. "Rachel weeping for her children, and refusing to be comforted because they are not."

A stately steamer that hath ploughed the restless deep for many a lengthy voyage—hath battled successfully with tempestuous seas and elemental war, is nearing its desired haven, and *home* is the watchword on many a lip, and thrills through many a heart of those who tread with buoyant step, its ample decks, or gaze, with straining eyes, from its proud bulwarks, over the mighty waste of waters that still divides them from the wished-for land.

A dazzling sun sheds its cheering beams around,

*"Lighting the ship and the feathery foam,
And gladdening the sailor like words from home."*

And under its benign influence, the most timid forget their fears, and the weak grow strong again.

The passengers on deck are variously employed; some conversing, some gazing listlessly on the sea, anticipating, doubtless, a speedy meeting with loved ones; while others are walking up and down its spacious decks, perhaps recalling the shady walks of their own native land, and wondering how soon their feet shall tread its blessed soil again. Among the latter are two persons, to whom we would direct the reader's particular attention.

The one, a noble-looking man, with stalwart frame and ruddy countenance, though his silvery hair and furrowed brow betoken the advance of age; while, leaning on his arm, clad in deep mourning, is a lady, still youthful and fair, but wearing that subdued and pensive expression, which past sorrow often leaves as its imperishable record.

"What a lovely day, is it not, Uncle," said the lady, addressing her venerable companion.

"Yes, very fine," was the reply; "and yet dear, I am afraid there is a storm at hand."

"A storm, why Uncle, you are not going to become a prophet of evil, are you, for surely there is not the least sign of one now? See, the sky is almost an unsullied blue, with the exception of those few fleecy clouds yonder."

"Yes; but they betoken, if I mistake not, a coming tempest, and one of no slight character. The

wind, too, is rising rapidly in that direction; before night we shall have a perfect gale."

"Do you know, Alice," continued the old man, affectionately and impressively, as he clasped in his own, the little white hand, "I have had, ever since coming on board, a presentiment of evil, and last night it was confirmed by a singular dream.

"I thought my dear departed wife and your mother, both came to me. Their garments were white and glistening; their tread was noiseless, or rather, they seemed wafted along through some invisible agency. The beauty and bloom of youth were on their brow, but blended with a seraphic radiance, such as I never before beheld. They bent above me with looks of indescribable love, and then, in tones unutterably solemn and sweet, repeated these words, "Prepare, for the time is short;" and, having uttered this warning, they vanished, and I awoke."

"It was a singular dream," said Alice after a short pause; "but, Uncle, I have often heard you say you were no believer in dreams?"

"Nor am I, dear; in general they are but idle fantasies of the ever-active brain; fancy making riot, while reason is lulled to rest. But there are visions of the night, distinct from these, such as seem sent, by their solemnity and significance, as premonitions of the future, so that it find us not altogether unprepared."

"But, perhaps, I am wrong in thus disturbing your mind," for Alice looked unusually grave; "it may have no reference to our present voyage; and

as to the time being short, that, viewed in the light of eternity, it will certainly prove to the youngest."

But come, dear, I see you are shivering; it is really getting quite cold, and the wind is gradually increasing; I think we had better retire to the saloon."

Alice Weldon—for we presume the reader has already recognized her again, had been, for the past five years, a loved and cherished inmate of her Uncle's home in Australia. Under the care of a friend, she had gone thither after her mother's death, who lingered only for a few months since we last beheld her.

A week or two previous to her decease, a warm and affectionate letter was received from Mrs. Weldon's only brother, with a remittance sufficient to pay the expenses of both; for unaware of his sister's dangerous illness, he urged them both to join him in his distant retreat.

"His sister," he wrote, "should have every comfort; and childless himself, he would welcome and cherish her daughter as his own."

Too late, alas, too late for the dying woman, came the message; but it brought her sweet consolation in the knowledge that, from henceforth, her daughter would be comfortably provided for; and she charged Alice, as soon after her death as possible, to place herself under the care of the friend recommended by her uncle, who was soon to leave for Australia, and thus find a home and kindred, though in a distant land.

Her wishes were sacredly complied with; and Alice had now been for the last few years, as we have already intimated, an inmate of her Uncle's hospitable home; and, in all but name, an affectionate daughter, to the hearts who so kindly cherished her.

But again, Death, well styled the insatiable archer, invaded the peace of that happy home.

His arrow pierced with fatal aim, the heart of the faithful wife, and, for the past year, Mr. Oldfield, deprived of her who had truly been to him the desire of his eyes, had stood widowed and desolate indeed, had it not been for the ever ready and thoughtful attention of his orphan niece, to whom he looked constantly for sympathy and comfort, and whose affection had become his chief earthly solace.

And of late, the old man had pined to see once more his native land, for the links that bound him to his adopted country were severed, and he resolved at length, to revisit once more the scenes of his boyhood's days.

The resolution was carried, with Mr. Oldfield's accustomed promptitude, into speedy execution; and but a short time had elapsed, ere, accompanied by Alice, he embarked in the steamer "Cygnet," bound for England, from whence he intended, after a short stay, to sail to the British Provinces in America.

But, "Man proposes, God disposes."

Never again was Mr. Oldfield destined to tread the green fields and smiling valleys of Acadia;

never again to stand beside its deep flowing rivers
or embosomed lakes ; to explore, once more, the
haunts which had long kept green in his memory :
never to weep over the graves of early kindred adn
friends, for even now,

“ Unseen hands of spirits are ringing his knell.”

END OF PART FIRST.

*The Concluding Part will be published in Janu-
ary, 1870.*

